

It's Good for Them!

Promoting Physical and Social-Emotional Development at Snacks and Mealtimes

Now you are ready to begin the audio cast! You will hear welcome, brief panel introductions, and a panel discussion. The Question and Answer session was pre-taped. The case studies above and information below are referenced in the audio cast.

Audio Cast Objectives

During this audio cast, panelists:

1. Highlight the ways in which the **Head Start Program Performance Standards** related to nutrition support not only healthy physical development of children but also healthy social and emotional development;
2. Address the personal and cultural importance of food and feeding relationships; and
3. Describe ways that families and staff can develop healthy and responsive feeding relationships with very young children in all program options.

Relevant Head Start Program Performance Standards

Below are some of the **Head Start Program Performance Standards** that address the connection between physical and social-emotional development at snacks and mealtimes. Please note that, while these **Standards** are the most relevant to our discussion, this is not a complete list. For more information, please see the **Head Start Program Performance Standards**.

§1304.23 Child nutrition.

- (a) Identification of nutritional needs. Staff and families must work together to identify each child's nutritional needs, taking into account staff and family discussions concerning:
 - 2) Information about family eating patterns, including cultural preferences, special dietary requirements for each child with nutrition-related health problems, and the feeding requirements of infants and toddlers and each child with disabilities (see 45 CFR 1308.20);

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(3) For infants and toddlers, current feeding schedules and amounts and types of food provided, including whether breast milk or formula and baby food is used; meal patterns; new foods introduced; food intolerances and preferences; voiding patterns; and observations related to developmental changes in feeding and nutrition. This information must be shared with parents and updated regularly.

(b) Nutritional services.

(1) (iv) Each infant and toddler in center-based settings must receive food appropriate to his or her nutritional needs, developmental readiness, and feeding skills, as recommended in the USDA meal pattern or nutrient standard menu planning requirements outlined in 7 CFR parts 210, 220, and 226.

(c) Meal service. Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that nutritional services in center-based settings contribute to the development and socialization of enrolled children by providing that:

- (1) A variety of food is served which broadens each child's food experiences;
- (2) Food is not used as punishment or reward, and that each child is encouraged, but not forced, to eat or taste his or her food;
- (3) Sufficient time is allowed for each child to eat;
- (4) All toddlers and preschool children and assigned classroom staff, including volunteers, eat together family style and share the same menu to the extent possible;
- (5) Infants are held while being fed and are not laid down to sleep with a bottle;
- (6) Medically-based diets or other dietary requirements are accommodated; and
- (7) As developmentally appropriate, opportunity is provided for the involvement of children in food-related activities.

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Child and Adult Food Program Infant Meal Pattern Requirements

(On-line at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/ProgramBasics/basics.htm#Infant%20Meals>)

Child Care Infant Meal Pattern Lunch or Supper		
Birth through 3 Months	4 through 7 Months	8 through 11 Months
4-6 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breast milk ^{2,3}	4-8 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breast milk ^{2,3} ; 0-3 tablespoons of infant cereal ^{1,4} ; and 0-3 tablespoons of fruit or vegetable or both ⁴	6-8 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breast milk ^{2,3} ; 2-4 tablespoons of infant cereal ¹ ; and/or 1-4 tablespoons of meat, fish, poultry, egg yolk, cooked dry beans or peas; or ½-2 ounces of cheese; or 1-4 ounces (volume) of cottage cheese; or 1-4 ounces (weight) of cheese food or cheese spread; and 1-4 tablespoons of fruit or vegetable or both
<p>¹ Infant formula and dry infant cereal must be iron-fortified.</p> <p>² Breast milk or formula, or portions of both, may be served; however, it is recommended that breast milk be served in place of formula from birth through 11 months.</p> <p>³ For some breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breast milk per feeding, a serving of less than the minimum amount of breast milk may be offered, with additional breast milk offered if the infant is still hungry.</p> <p>⁴ A serving of this component is required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it.</p>		

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Child and Adult Food Program Child Meal Pattern Requirements

(On-line at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/ProgramBasics/basics.htm#Infant%20Meals>)

Child Care Meal Pattern			
Lunch or Supper for Children Select All Four Components for a Reimbursable Meal			
Food Components	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12¹
1 milk fluid milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
2 fruits/vegetables juice, ² fruit and/or vegetable	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
1 grains/bread³ bread or cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin or cold dry cereal or hot cooked cereal or pasta or noodles or grains	 1/2 slice 1/2 serving 1/4 cup 1/4 cup 1/4 cup	 1/2 slice 1/2 serving 1/3 cup 1/4 cup 1/4 cup	 1 slice 1 serving 3/4 cup 1/2 cup 1/2 cup
1 meat/meat alternate meat or poultry or fish ⁴ or alternate protein product or cheese or egg or cooked dry beans or peas or peanut or other nut or seed butters or nuts and/or seeds ⁵ or yogurt ⁶	 1 oz. 1 oz. 1 oz. 1/2 1/4 cup 2 Tbsp. 1/2 oz. 4 oz.	 1½ oz. 1½ oz. 1½ oz. 3/4 3/8 cup 3 Tbsp. 3/4 oz. 6 oz.	 2 oz. 2 oz. 2 oz. 1 1/2 cup 4 Tbsp. 1 oz. 8 oz.
¹ Children age 12 and older may be served larger portions based on their greater food needs. They may not be served less than the minimum quantities listed in this column. ² Fruit or vegetable juice must be full-strength. ³ Breads and grains must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour. Cereal must be whole-grain or enriched or fortified. ⁴ A serving consists of the edible portion of cooked lean meat or poultry or fish.			

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⁵ Nuts and seeds may meet only one-half of the total meat/meat alternate serving and must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to fulfill the lunch or supper requirement.

⁶ Yogurt may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened.

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The Responsive Process

J. Ronald Lally (1990), at WestEd's Program for Infant Toddler Care, developed a simple three-step process for learning about and providing nurturing, responsive care to infants and toddlers. The process recognizes the diversity of children and that children are best supported in their development by adults who can recognize and respond to their individual needs and temperaments. Here, we have adapted the Responsive Process for use at snacks and mealtimes:

Watch:

Observe the child – without interpreting what you see. Use all of your senses to understand what the child is experiencing. Look (and listen!) for what happens before and after behaviors of concern or interest. Consider both the physical environment and the social environment.

Ask:

Young children communicate through their behavior. Ask questions – of yourself, parents, your health and nutrition coordinator and others - that help you understand what you have observed. Consider the following:

- **Development:** Where is the child developmentally?
- **Temperament:** What do I know about the child's temperament? How might s/he express that temperament at mealtime?
- **Physical factors:** Could the child be very hungry/tired/sick today? Are there health issues that impact mealtime in general?
- **Self-regulation:** How does the child express hunger? How does s/he say s/he is full? How does s/he communicate what foods s/he likes or does not like? How does s/he calm him or herself? What tools does the child use to express his or her emotions or needs?
- **Environment (physical and social):** What is triggering or reinforcing this behavior in the moment? Does there seem to be a pattern?
- **Home environment:** What do I know/can I learn about the home environment or family mealtime practices that can help me understand this behavior?
- **Staff, family and cultural understanding:** How do I/does the family understand or respond to this behavior? How does the wider community respond?

Adapt:

Use the information you gather to develop a theory: What do you think the child is communicating? How will you respond?

Keep in mind that this is a fluid and cyclical process. Use different pieces at different times, as appropriate. And, after you adapt, always observe again to make sure that the adaptations are working! Remember, too, that children are constantly growing and changing. Continue to use this process, in formal and informal ways, to inform your work in providing children and their families responsive services.

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Tips for the “Picky Eater”

Adapted from Lumeng, J., Mabry, I., & Kaplan-Sanoff, M. *Trouble at the Table: The Childhood Obesity Epidemic*. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE National Training Institute. (2006). Revised August, 2007. (Updated January, 2008)

As toddlers move toward independence, they begin to assert themselves at the table. Parents and program staff often have concerns about how to offer young children nutritious food that they will eat. The tips below are taken from recent research on encouraging young children to eat well.

- **Children are less likely to eat less familiar foods in over-stimulating or stressful environments.**

Implication for parents and programs: Promote calm, quiet mealtimes.

- **Children are more likely to follow the lead of a peer model (another child) to eat a new food than an adult (parent or teacher) model.**

Implication for parents and programs: Focus energy on highlighting how much other children are enjoying the food as opposed to how much the teacher or adult enjoys the food. Thoughtfully plan seating arrangements of children; seat the target child with other children who are hearty eaters or vice versa.

- **Verbal praise for eating a food ‘increases’ liking for the food over time.**

Implication for parents and programs: Provide praise to children who are eating target foods.

- **Rewarding a child for eating a food ‘decreases’ preference for the target food over time.**

Implication for parents and programs: Do not bribe children with a reward to eat a target food.

- **Using a food as a reward for completing another task increases liking for the food.**

Implication for parents and programs: Do not use sweets as rewards for desired behavior. Please note: The **Head Start Program Performance Standards** state that, in Head Start programs, “food is not used as punishment or reward” (§1304.2(c) (2)).

- **Foods typically must be tasted 10 times before they are accepted and preference begins to increase.**

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Implication for parents and programs: Present target foods repeatedly, at least 10 different times.

- **Requiring that children “try one bite” is associated with an increased willingness to try other new foods over time.**

Implication for parents and programs: If it does not cause distress for anyone involved, the “try one bite” rule is reasonable.

- **For older children, providing verbal information about a food’s flavor/texture increases their willingness to try the food.**

Implication for parents and programs: Explain to children what ingredients are in a food and what they can expect it to taste like. Rename the food, for example, “Hummus is like peanut butter.”

- **Combining a non-preferred food with a preferred food may be helpful.**

Implication for parents and programs: Provide opportunities to combine foods (e.g. dipping veggies in dressing).

- **Human beings biologically prefer foods high in sugar, fat and salt, and particularly combinations of these.**

Implication for parents and programs: Adding sugar, fat and/or salt in **moderation** to vegetables (instead of offering dessert) takes advantage of biology.